

For Immediate Release

March 15, 2007

2007/nr-074

PATIENT FRIENDLY WEBSITE AND INDEPENDENT DATA COUNCIL STRENGTHEN WAIT TIME STRATEGY

Government Implements Kirby Recommendations As Wait Times Decline

TORONTO – The McGuinty government continues to make progress in reporting on and reducing wait times for key services with the launch of a more patient-friendly wait time website and the creation of an independent Wait Time Data Certification Council, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“We’ve made some important changes to the ground-breaking Ontario wait times website, which has already received more than three million hits since it was first launched in 2005,” said Smitherman. “The website is the window for the public to see how well we’re doing in improving access. More importantly, it gives patients and doctors the information they need to make decisions about the health care they receive and give. Today’s improvements are part of our ongoing efforts to safeguard accuracy and ensure the website is as simple and user-friendly as possible.”

By visiting www.ontariowaittimes.com, Ontarians can see how long patients are waiting for treatment in the five key services that are part of the government’s Wait Time Strategy – cataract surgery, cancer surgery, total joint hip and knee replacements, selected cardiac procedures, and MRI/CT exams. Updated information is posted on the website every two months.

Smitherman said the government has responded to Senator Michael Kirby’s recent review of Ontario’s Wait Time Information System by:

- Making the website more user-friendly with the addition of consumer and health care provider sections, and using simpler language to explain the data to the public.
- Creating a Data Certification Council that will review the processes on how the wait time information is collected and reported prior to its public display on the Ontario government website. The council will consist of Michael Decter, Chair of Cancer Quality Council of Ontario; Graham Scott, chair of the Canadian Institute for Health Information; and Hilary Short, President and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association;

“I am pleased to Chair this new Council and to assist in the provision of accurate and timely wait time information for all Ontarians”, said Michael Decter, Chair of Cancer Quality Council of Ontario.

Since 2005, because of the government’s investment of \$614 million in more than 700,000 additional procedures and innovative health care partnerships, considerable progress has been made in reducing wait times.

Visitors to the re-launched web site will find the latest data showing that wait times, measured from the decision to treat, until the treatment is completed, are down in all five key health service areas in comparison to when the first comprehensive wait times data was collected in August-September of 2005.

"This new expert committee and the redesigned website are important steps in reporting on wait times and identifying opportunities for improving access to health care services across the province," said Dr. Alan Hudson, Lead of Ontario's Wait Time Strategy. "We've been presenting wait time information with unprecedented openness so patients can see where the shorter wait times are and hospitals are accountable for their performances."

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

-30-

Media Contacts:

Jeff Rohrer
Minister's Office
416-326-8016

A.G. Klei
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
416-314-6197

Members of the general public: 1-866-532-3161

This news release, along with other media materials, such as matte stories and audio clips, on other subjects, are available on our website at: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca> under the News Media section.

For more information on achievements in health care, visit: www.resultsonario.gov.on.ca.

Disponible en français.